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FCLP features diverse topics, participant composition

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The 14th iteration of the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security [Fusion Center Leaders Program](#) drew 29 participants from the local, state and federal levels February 1-5.

The weeklong course offers experienced and new fusion center professionals the opportunity to discuss with experts the collection of intelligence, its analysis, ensuring intelligence consumers' needs are met and even civil liberties issues. Since the program began in 2010 some 384 people have participated.

"The FCLP participants continue to impress and this class, with its diverse range of participants representing federal, state and local governments, finished the week with both a focus and an intent to return to their fusion centers and practice what they've learned at NPS," FCLP Program Manager Robert Simeral said.



Doug Lee, a CHDS master's degree alumnus and Commander of the California State Threat Assessment Center, commended the expertise of instructors, especially presentations from New York City Fire Department Deputy Chief Joe Pfeifer on Opportunities and Challenges and a session titled Meeting Customer Needs led by CHDS instructor Dave Brannan.

"I have been a fusion center director for fewer than five months, and I know I have a lot to learn," Lee noted "This program, through the lectures and the discussions with my classmates, has helped me see the bigger picture and has provided me the background to ask the questions that will help me manage our center to the best of my ability."

Stephen Sokoloff, Deputy Director/Homeland Security Coordinator with the Missouri Department of Public Safety, oversees an array of agencies within the department, the Missouri Information Analysis Center among them. The broad subject matter the FCLP covers provided a sort of crash course, he said.

"Outreach is one of the biggest areas I want to explore – the surveying and recruitment of sources," Sokoloff said. "It seems to me the products aren't reaching all the people they need to. I believe that is an area where I can be of assistance."

Discussions surrounding civil liberties issues led by frequent guest speaker Mike German of the Brennan Center of Justice and American Civil Liberties Union was beneficial by providing a perspective to issues regarding fusion centers that deterred bias and stereotyping, said Alexander Obert, Executive State and Local Fellow with the Joint Counterterrorism Assessment Team (JCAT) at the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) and a Fire Officer with Fairfax County (Virginia) Fire and Rescue Department.

"His argument was beneficial to fusion center leaders by throwing the responsibilities back on us with the challenges of creating a relative and objective environment that should better uphold constitutional values and increase fusion center accountability – extremely important to fusion center privacy policy and transparency," Obert noted. "This was found to be a paramount and foundational principle themed throughout the week on protecting the civil liberties and civil rights of Americans as the most important customer of fusion centers."

The FCLP provided presentations and discussions that assisted in implementing strategic and critical thinking towards solving operational challenges surrounding fusion centers and network multiplexity, Obert added.

“The challenges that will be faced by my organization, specifically with nontraditional partners and customers will include the importance of remaining objective with actionable and future initiatives,” he said.

New Jersey State Police Detective Captain Juan Colon, with the New Jersey Regional Operations Intelligence Center, also commended German’s presentation for providing an alternative view.

“I have gathered a good grasp of privacy and civilities and protective measures through participation in the development of our fusion center’s privacy policy and through staffing thousands of intelligence products in relation to privacy related information,” he noted. “While I have a high level of confidence in the application of our privacy policy, hearing the ACLU’s perspective on fusion centers sensitized me to consider how our information may be perceived by the ACLU.”

Colon also commended the presentation from risk management guru Gordon Graham, noting it “revealed how vulnerable we are at work, home, and everyday life.”

The study of Privacy, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties has expanded in the FCLP and considerable time is dedicated during the program to hearing both government and private sector advocates of civil liberties, while discussing how to shape fusion center operations to embrace it, Simeral noted.

“As we finish up our sixth year of FCLP, we have explored new niches in the syllabus to enhance the academic rigor of the program,” Simeral said. “This is quite useful to the FCLP participants, as it sensitizes them to the issues and outcomes of privacy policy and implementation

The FCLP is sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security and was developed based on input in partnership the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as state and local partners through the Criminal Intelligence Coordinating Committee and the [National Fusion Center Association](#).

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